

Message Text

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SUBJECT: LENINGRAD SMUGGLERS' TRIAL

REF: (A) LENINGRAD 01718, (B) LENINGRAD 01723
(C) STATE 052681, (D) LENINGRAD 00303

1. AS EXPECTED (REFTEL A), LENINGRAD MEDIA COMMENTED AT SOME LENGTH ON RECENT LENINGRAD SMUGGLERS' TRIAL. COMMENT TOOK FORM BOTH OF A QUARTER-PAGE ARTICLE IN LENINGRADSKAYA PRAVDA JUNE 24, AND IN TWO-PART TV DOCUMENTARY ON LENINGRAD TV CHANNEL JUNE 30. HOWEVER, TO RELIEF OF LOCAL REFUSENIK COMMUNITY, NEITHER ARTICLE NOR VIDEO FILM USED TRIAL AS EFFORT TO PLAY UP REFUSENIK STATUS OF SEVERAL OF CULPRITS OR TO BLACKEN REFUSENIK COMMUNITY AS WHOLE. INSTEAD, MEDIA PLAYED CASE PURELY AS DRAMATIC DETECTIVE SHOW WITH GREEDY SMUGGLERS BROUGHT TO JUSTICE BY GOOD GUYS PROTECTING NATIONAL HERITAGE.

2. PRINCIPALS IN SMUGGLING TRIAL WERE GIVEN AS:

-- GENYA BORISOVNA GUTKINA (NOT UTKINA AS LISTED REFTEL C), GRADUATE OF LENINGRAD UNIVERSITY, ART CURATOR AND MEMBER OF UNION OF ARTISTS, WHO WAS DESCRIBED AS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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INSPIRER AND "MOST ANSWERABLE" OF CULPRITS. GUTKINA REPORTEDLY WENT BY PSEUDONYM "AUNT NINA."

-- BORIS ROMANOVICH BELOSTOTSKIY, DESCRIBED AS GROUP'S "ORGANIZER AND PERFORMER" AND LEADER CONSTRUCTING RING OVER PERIOD SEVERAL YEARS.

-- YEVSEY EL'EVICH BRAVIY, DESCRIBED AS ONE OF GUTKINA'S RECRUITS.

-- CUSTOM'S INSPECTORS FNU SAYKIN AND FNU NAZARENKO. CONTRARY TO EARLIER REFUSENIK COMMENTS TO US THAT SOVIET CUSTOMS AGENTS WERE "FROM SOMEWHERE IN SOUTH,"

LENINGRADSKAYA PRAVDA ARTICLE INDICATES THAT THEY OPERATED OUT OF PULKOVO AIRPORT. THEIR RESPECTIVE NAMES HAVE RUSSIAN AND UKRAINIAN RING.

-- FNU SHMAL'TS AND FNU AMIRADZHIBI, SOVIETS WHO REPORTEDLY SERVED AS CONTACT BETWEEN BELOSTOTSKIY AND CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC DIPLOMAT DAVID M'BONDJI.

3. ACCORDING TO MEDIA, PRINCIPAL RECIPIENTS OF CONTRABAND SEEM TO HAVE BEEN M'BONDJI, WHO SMUGGLED ITEMS IN DIPLO-MATIC POUCH, FOR WHICH HE WAS DECLARED PERSONA NON-GRATA; AND ONE FNU WASSERMAN, BELOSTOTSKIY'S MOTHER-IN-LAW WHO HAD EMIGRATED FROM USSR. TV PROGRAM MADE CLEAR THAT EMIGRATION WAS TO NEW YORK CITY.

4. LENINGRADSKAYA STATED THAT CULPRITS WERE SENTENCED TO "LONG TERM IMPRISONMENT" AND CONFISCATION ALL PROPERTY, BUT DID NOT GIVE SPECIFICS. WE DID NOT PICK UP SEN-TENCING SPECIFICS FROM TV PROGRAM. INFO FROM REFUSENIK LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SOURCES ON SENTENCES IS CONTAINED IN REF A. GROUP WAS SAID TO HAVE SMUGGLED ABROAD ART OBJECTS (APPARENTLY MAINLY PAINTINGS TO VALUE OF 220,000 RUBLES) AND 186 ICONS OF UNKNOWN VALUE.

5. COMMENT: AS EARLIER REPORTED, BELOSTOTSKIY AND BRAVIY ARE REFUSENIKS BUT EARLIER REFUSENIK FEARS HERE THAT TRIAL WOULD BE USED TO SMEAR LENINGRAD REFUSENIKS IN GENERAL DID NOT MATERIALIZE. LOCAL AUTHORITIES, HOW- EVER, APPARENTLY HAVE USED CASE TO CRACK DOWN HARD ON CUSTOMS. WE NOTICED FULL-SCALE INSPECTION OF CUSTOMS OPERATIONS BY MOSCOW CUSTOMS INSPECTORS AT LENINGRAD- FINNISH BORDER IN LATE JUNE AND LOCAL CUSTOMS AUTHORITIES HAVE RECENTLY EXERCIZED THEIR RIGHTS TO INSPECT LUGGAGE AND HOUSEHOLD EFFECTS OF MEMBERS OF LENINGRAD CONSULAR COMMUNITY WITHOUT DIPLOMATIC PASSPORTS, AS WELL AS ESCALATING RHETORIC ON THEIR INSPECTION RIGHTS RE DIPLO- MATS AS WELL. (WE HAVE, HOWEVER, HAD NO CASE OF DIPLOMATS' BAGGAGE OR HOUSEHOLD EFFECTS BEING ACTUALLY INSPECTED.) IN ADDITION, WEST GERMAN NATIONAL, NORBERT MUELLER, WAS APPREHENDED AT AIRPORT HERE JULY 1 WITH SIX ICONS IN HIS LUGGAGE AND IS STILL BEING HELD BY LENINGRAD AUTHORITIES.

POSSIBILITY STILL EXISTS THAT HE COULD BE EXPELLED,
SOLUTION WHICH THE FRG CONGEN HERE IS URGING. HOWEVER,
LENGTH OF HIS DETENTION ALREADY IS WELL BEYOND USUAL TWO-
OR THREE-DAY DETENTION AND EXPULSION WHICH HAS
CHARACTERIZED TREATMENT OF FEW WESTERN SMUGGLERS ARRESTED
HERE IN RECENT YEARS. BUCHANAN

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